

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 RABAT 00775 01 OF 02 121036Z

11

ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 AF-06 EUR-12 ISO-00 IO-11 CIAE-00 DODE-00

PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01

SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 OMB-01 /087 W

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P 120835Z FEB 76

FM AMEMBASSY RABAT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7670

INFO AMEMBASSY ALGIERS PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY DAKAR

AMEMBASSY MADRID

AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

AMEMBASSY TUNIS

AMCONSUL CASABLANCA

AMCONSUL TANGIER

USMISSION USUN

CINCUSNAVEUR LONDON

USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GERMANY

FOSIF ROTA

COMSIXTHFLT

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 RABAT 0775

USCINCEUR AND CINCUSNAVEUR ALSO FOR POLADS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR PBOR MO SS SP MR AG

SUBJECT: SAHARA ROUNDUP

1. SUMMARY: ACCORDING TO FRENCH NEWS AGENCY AND ONE OFFICIAL GOM
SOURCE, MOROCCANS ENTERED MAHBES FEB 10, BUT GOM HAS MADE NO ANNOUNCE-

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PAGE 02 RABAT 00775 01 OF 02 121036Z

MENT AND CONFLICTING PRIVATE STATEMENTS BY GOM OFFICIALS RAISE

QUESTIONS ABOUT THIS

REPORT. PRESS EXPANDS ON INFOMIN BENHIMA'S REMARKS ON MOROCCAN PRECONDITIONS FOR CAIRO FONMINS' MEETING. LOCAL MEDIA PLAY UP FRENCH PRESS MENTION OF POSSIBILITY OF ALGERIAN MOVE ON MAURITANIA; RYDBECK REPORTEDLY FINDS PRO-MOROCCAN ATMOSPHERE AND MAJORITY OF JEMAA IN SAHARA. MOROCCAN AMBASSADOR LARAKI IN CAIRO, JALLUD IN PARIS DISCUSS SAHARA. END SUMMARY.

2. MAHBESHYAWAN? FRENCH NEWS AGENCY REPORTED MORNING FEB. 11 THAT MAHBES EVACUATED BY ALGERIANS AND ENTERED BY MOROCCAN FORCES PREVIOUS NIGHT WITHOUT OPPOSITION. JUAGY INFORMED GOM SOURCE PRIVATELY CONFIRMED REPORT. GOM HAS YET TO MAKE PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENT, HOWEVER, AND SECSTATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS CHERKAOUTI TOLD POLCOUNS LATE FEB. 11 THAT PRESS REPORTS "PREMATURE", AND THAT THERE NO CONFIRMATION MOROCCANS HAD ACTUALLY TAKEN MAHBES, ALTHOUGH GOM FORCES HAD NO DOUBT REACHED VICINITY.

3. MORE FROM BENHIMA IN PARIS: FURTHER PRESS COVERAGE GAVE MORE DETAILS ON INFOMIN BENHIMA'S REMARKS IN PARIS, WITH SHARPENED DEFINITION OF MOROCCAN NEGOTIATING TERMS (SEE RABAT 0743). IN FEB 10 PARIS INTERVIEW WITH ITALIAN DAILY LA STAMPA, COVERED BY SEMI-OFFICIAL PRESS FEB 11, BENHIMA

--REPEATED THAT NEGOTIATIONS AND ACCORD WITH ALGERIA LEADING TO ECONOMIC COOPERATION NOT TO BE EXCLUDED PROVIDED MOROCCAN SOVEREIGNTY IN SAHARA RECOGNIZED, WHILE "SELF-DETERMINATION" AND MODIFICATION OF MAP OUT OF THE QUESTION.

--STATED THAT ENTIRETY OF POLISARIO FORCES AND NUMEROUS ALGERIAN TROOPS CONCENTRATED IN MAHBES, BUT THAT GOM PLANNED NO RPT NO IMMEDIATE ACTION, IN ORDER ALLOW ALGERIA TIME TO REFLECT AND WITHDRAW ITS TROOPS. BENHIMA WARNED, HOWEVER, THAT MOROCCO WOULD NOT INDEFINITELY TOLERATE ILLEGAL OCCUPATION OF ITS TERRITORY. COMMENTED THAT ALGERIAN ARMY MIGHT BE BETTER ARMED THAN MOROCCAN, BUT THAT AMGALA BATTLE HAD PROVED IT NOT MORE POWERFUL. (OPPOSITION DAILY L'OPINION MEANWHILE REPORTED FEB. 11 THAT MAHBES SEEMED ALREADY EVACUATED AND MOROCCAN ENTRY "QUESTION OF HOURS.")

--AGAIN MINIMIZED LIKELIHOOD OF EARLY SUMMIT, WHETHER OR NOT FONMINS ARRIVED AT AGREEMENT IN MEETING BASED ON EGYPTIAN FORMULA.

--STATED HE SAW "NO CONNECTION" BETWEEN SAHARA AND
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PAGE 03 RABAT 00775 01 OF 02 121036Z

TINDOUF QUESTIONS. BENHIMA MENTIONED 1972 ALGERIAN-MOROCCAN AGREEMENT, NOTING ITS TERMS CALLED FOR RATIFICATION BY LEGISLATURES OF BOTH COUNTRIES BEFORE IT COULD COME INTO FORCE. STRESSED THAT JOINT DEVELOPMENT OF TINDOUF (I.E., GARA DJEBILET) RESOURCES "SINE QUA NON" OF AGREEMENT.

--UNDERScoreD THAT MOROCCO WOULD NOT RPT NPT SIT DOWN ANYWHERE WITH POLISARIO. SAHARA ALREADY SELF-DETERMINED AND CASE CLOSED.

--CLAIMED ALGERIA HAD NO RIGHT TO SPEAK ON BEHALF OF NON-ALIGNED COUNTRIES OR USE THE GROUP FOR ITS OWN GAIN.

4. GIRM TO BECOME ALGERIAN TARGET?: SEMI-OFFICIAL PRESS ALSO FEATURED FRENCH L'EXPRESS REPORT THAT BOUMEDIENE "MIGHT ATTEMPT" MILITARY ACTION AGAINST MAURITANIA. CITING MILITARY OBSERVERS IN ALGIERS, L'EXPRESS QUOTED AS SAYING

--BOUMEDIENE MAY UNDERTAKE TO MOVE AGAINST GIRM, EITHER BY "SUBVERSION IN NOUAKCHOTT" OR "QUICK, LARGE SCALE OFFENSIVE" WITH RISK OF CEMENTING "HOLY ALLIANCE" AGAINST ALGERIA. HOWEVER, MOROCCAN MOVE ON MAHBES COULD PROVOKE ALGERIAN COUNTER-ATTACK "IN TLEMCEN AREA."

--ALGERIAN ARMY HAS INCREASED FROM 55,000 SOLDIERS AND 15,000 GENDARMES TO 100,000 IN PAST FOUR MONTHS. BULK OF FORCES MOVED TO SOUTHWEST FRONTIERS. A SIXTH MILITARY REGION, TINDOUF, RECENTLY CREATED.

---IN PAST THREE MONTHS, ALGERIANS HAVE PURCHASED T-62 TANKS FROM LIBYAN STOCK AS WELL AS ADVANCED ANTI-TANK WEAPONRY. ANTONOV 22 AND 12 TRANSPORTS ARRIVING ALGIERS DAILY WITH, "ACCORDING TO ALGIERS SOURCES," FOOD AND MEDICINES FOR GUERRILLAS. ELEVEN SUCH AIRCRAFT LANDED JAN. 28.

5. L'EXPRESS REPORTEDLY WENT ON TO EXPLAIN ALGERIA'S INTRANSIGENCY IN TERMS OF ITS INABILITY TO ACCEPT MOROCCAN PRIMACY IN MAGHREB. IN PAPER'S VIEW, SITUATION ADDED UP TO ALGERIAN ECONOMIC, POLITICAL AND MILITARY REVERSALS WHICH MIGHT LEAD ALGERIAN PEOPLE ONE DAY TO ASK WHO WAS RESPONSIBLE.

6. UN EMISSARY; LE MONDE COMMENTARY: UN EMISSARY RYDBECK ARRIVED DAKHLA FEB. 10 AND RECEIVED "PARTICULARLY WARM WELCOME," ACCORDING TO MOROCCAN PRESS. HE REPORTEDLY ALSO VISITED SMARA BEFORE RETURNING TO MADRID. FEB. 12 LE MATIN TOOK TIME OUT FROM ITS FEUD WITH LE MONDE TO REPRINT LATTER'S FAVORABLE ARTICLE ON CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 04 RABAT 00775 01 OF 02 121036Z

RYDBECK MISSION. ARTICLE SAID RYDBECK GREETED WITH PRO-MOROCCAN SLOGANS FROM ENTHUSIASTIC CROWD. "A THOUSAND HANDS HELD OUT PORTRAITS OF THE KING." MOROCCAN, MAURITANIAN AND SPANISH GOVERNORS MET RYDBECK "WITHOUT APPREHENSION" AND MADE CASE THAT SELF-DETERMINATION HAD TAKEN PLACE IN ACCORDANCE WITH TRADITIONAL SAHARA PROCEDURES.

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PAGE 01 RABAT 00775 02 OF 02 120944Z

20

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INFO OCT-01 AF-06 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02

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AMEMBASSY CAIRO

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 RABAT 0775

USCINCEUR AND CINCUSNAVEUR ALSO FOR POLADS

7. ACCORDING TO LE MONDE, RYDBECK ALSO SEEING JEMAA MEMBERS:

47 IN EL AYOUN, 21 IN DAKHLA AND 6 IN SMARA. ONE MEMBER HAD

JUST RALLIED FROM ALGERIA AND POLISARIO, LE MONDE NOTED.

ARTICLE POINTED OUT THAT THESE FIGURES REPRESENTED THE

MAJORITY NEEDED FOR VALID DELIBERATIONS. ADDED THAT OTHER MEMBERS

OF JEMAA "PERMANENT COMMITTEE" HAD CONFIRMED TO RYDBECK THAT

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PAGE 02 RABAT 00775 02 OF 02 120944Z

MAJORITY HAD INDEED APPROVED MADRID ACCORD.

8. LE MONDE WENT ON TO DESCRIBE LIFE IN EL AYOUN AS RAPIDLY RETURNING TO NORMAL, WHILE ABOUT 400 SPANIARDS HAD RETURNED, INCLUDING 80 PERCENT OF BOU CRAA PERSONNEL.

(COMMENT: THIS ARITHMETIC SEEMS GARBLED, AS 800 SPANIARDS AND 400 LOCALS PREVIOUSLY MADE UP BOU CRAA STAFF, ACCORDING TO OUR INFORMATION.)

9. DIPLOMATIC. MOROCCAN AMB TO EGYPT LARAKI MET WITH MUBAREK IN CAIRO FEB. 9 AS NOTED BY SEMI-OFFICIAL PRESS. FEB. 10 JALLUD-CHIRAC MEETING IN PARIS ALSO REPORTED; SAHARA, FRANCO-ALGERIAN RELATIONS SAID TO HAVE BEEN DISCUSSED, INTER ALIA.

10. COMMENT: EXPANDED BENHIMA REFERENCES ON MAHBES, TINDOUF AND BORDER AGREEMENT CONTINUE TO LOOK LIKE HINTS AT NEGOTIATING TRADE-OFF.

REPORT OF ALGERIAN WITHDRAWAL FROM MAHBES MUST REMAIN IN DOUBTFUL CATEGORY FOR THE MOMENT, ALTHOUGH MOROCCANS NO DOUBT HOPEFUL IN ANY CASE THAT SUCH A MOVE, WHICH WOULD SERVE DUAL PURPOSE OF AVERTING MAJOR CONFRONTATION AND PAVING WAY FOR FURTHER DIPLOMACY, WITHIN REALM OF POSSIBILITY. NEUMANN

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